

VZCZCXRO8269

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RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAS #0657 1001657
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 101657Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0823
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 0019
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 1266
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

UNCLAS ALGIERS 000657

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [PHUM](#) [AG](#) [XA](#)

SUBJECT: MEETING OF AU EXPERTS ON MIGRATION HELD IN ALGIERS

REF: ALGIERS 496

EXPERTS SEEK COMMON AU POSITION

¶1. Mandated by the January Arab League Summit in Khartoum, the Commission of the African Union (AU) convened a meeting of migration and development experts in Algiers April 3-5. The participants addressed the major themes of security and stability, human rights, development, human resources, the African brain drain, and the growing number of migrants. The objective was to prepare a common African position for the Africa-Europe Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, planned for June.

AGREE ON NEED FOR COOPERATION TO STOP ILLEGAL MIGRATION

¶2. The experts agreed that any AU common position on migration and development should aim to curb clandestine immigration, while promoting the human rights and dignity of migrants. Regional and international cooperation and shared responsibility among the countries of origin, transit, and destination would be required for success. The action plan adopted by the participants at the meetings in Algiers invited African states which have not done so to adhere to the African Peer Review Mechanism as proof of their willingness to improve significantly their performance on migration issues and encouraged them to undertake awareness campaigns, especially in areas with high migration potential, on the risks and dangers of clandestine immigration.

ALGERIAN FM: MIGRATION A MAJOR CHALLENGE

¶3. In his remarks at the opening ceremony, Algerian FM Bedjaoui said the high-level participation of almost all states of the AU underscored the importance that African countries placed on migration and development issues. Migration, legal or illegal, was a major challenge for all African states, individually and collectively. Many if not most of our countries, the Minister said, have become countries of "origin, transit, and destination" for illegal immigrants. While migration flows to the U.S. and Europe were increasing, they remained relatively limited compared to intra-African migration, he noted. Bedjaoui added that fighting illegal migration flows, especially human trafficking networks, was a pressing necessity for African nations and the entire international community. He attributed the migration flows to poverty, unemployment, the lack of opportunity, rural exodus, armed conflict, political instability, and "too frequently, bad governance."

ALGERIA NIXES COOPERATION WITH MOROCCO

¶4. While calling for a "common strategy" against illegal migration "in the interests of migrants first, concerned countries next, and more generally the international community," Minister Delegate for African and Maghreb Affairs Abdelkader Messahel told the press Algeria would not support the initiative of Morocco, a non-AU member, to organize similar meetings. Algeria believed working within the AU framework was essential. Any other solution would be temporary and counter-productive, said Messahel, who made clear that Algeria would not attend July meetings in Rabat.

ERDMAN